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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: AMIR PLEADS FOR NATIONAL UNITY AS HE INTRODUCES
NEW CABINET

REF: A. 2008 KUWAIT 621
[B. KUWAIT 518](#)
[C. KUWAIT 516](#)
[D. 2008 KUWAIT 633](#)

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and
d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad al-Jaber Al Sabah on May 30 swore in sixteen new and returning ministers, introducing them to recently elected parliamentarians at the National Assembly's convening on May 31. This latest iteration of the government represents the 27th cabinet since Kuwaiti independence, and PM Shaykh Nasser al-Muhammed al-Ahmad Al Sabah's sixth since his rise to the premiership in 2006. It also reflects the PM's preferred method of including as many political factions in the government as possible. The new faces did not deter some public discontent voiced in the local press that key posts -- notably those of PM, Interior, and Defense -- were left unchanged. The number (six) of Al Sabah in the cabinet remained the same, but the Amir's nephew and ruling family insider, Shaykh Ahmad al-Fahd al-Ahmad Al Sabah, replaced former Minister of Information Sabah al-Khalid al-Hamad Al Sabah in the lineup. Other notable changes include the departure of female Education Minister Nouriya Al-Sabeeh, inclusion of Dr. Helal Al-Sayer as a technocrat Minister of Health, and the unopposed return of Jassem al-Khorafi as Speaker. A full cabinet lineup and bio information is provided para 7.

[1](#)2. (C) Islamists, still reeling from their May 16 parliamentary elections losses, demonstrated their continued intransigence at the convening of the Assembly by staging a walkout to object to the new cabinet lineup and the presence of women not "properly attired" with the traditional Islamic hijab. They were joined by members of the Rashid tribe protesting their lack of inclusion in the cabinet. End summary.

Amir Pleads for Unity

[1](#)3. (C) Highlighting long-standing frustration with Kuwait's political gridlock, the Amir in his May 30 State address to the new National Assembly, reiterated calls for national unity and urged the turning of "a new page to build the nation." Reading from a prepared script, he declared that the country had reached a level of "critical exhaustion" and appealed for the new legislators to look past sectarian and tribal issues to resolve ongoing disputes. Focusing on the themes of tolerance and action to counter chaos and bickering, the Amir urged commitment to democracy as the "tool that further instills the essence of nationalism." He also promised to personally monitor the performance of both the parliament and government, and warned that this might be

the Assembly's last chance to perform.

PM Attempts to Appease Tribes

¶4. (C) Though the May 16 elections provided a victory for liberals and moderates, and arguably a mandate for the Al Sabah to reform the political system, the PM is fully aware that even one determined MP can effectively derail governance through interpellation ("grilling") motions. Accordingly, the PM carefully crafted his cabinet to forestall challenges from disaffected MPs -- something he has failed to do five previous times, most recently in the May 2008 reshuffle (ref A). In the run-up to the May 31 convening of the National Assembly, the PM reportedly reached out to tribal elements to secure tribal leaders who could keep their MP kinsmen in check. The new cabinet includes representatives from three major tribes -- the Awazim, Mutayr, and Ajman -- but lacks a member from the powerful Rashidi tribe. Mubarak al-Duwaileh, an Islamist strategist associated with the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) told poloff May 27 that tribes and Islamists initially rebuffed the PM's overtures to join his government. The ensuing bartering between the PM and Islamist elements resulted -- at the last minute -- in a thinly veiled agreement by some tribalists to join the government as "independents" rather than as representatives of blocs.

Islamists Confirm Opposition Role

¶5. (C) Undaunted by the unprecedented victories of four

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female parliamentary candidates and their own losses in the May 16 elections (ref B), the Islamists are seeking to re-engage as spoilers in the political arena. Fourteen Islamist and tribal MPs (out of 50 total elected members of the Assembly) declared their displeasure with the government by walking out during the May 31 roll call of the new parliamentarians. Though their grievances largely targeted the presence of three women who do not wear the hijab (MP Dr. Rola Dashti, MP Dr. Aseel al-Awadhi, and newly appointed Education Minister Dr. Moudhi Al-Homoud), their gesture also reflected the unhappiness with the makeup of the new cabinet. Four MPs from the Rashidi tribe (Saad Khanfour, Shuwayb al-Muwayizri, Mubarak al-Khrainej, and Mubarak al-Waalan), for example, walked out to protest the tribe's absence from the new government. Islamist Dr. Walid al-Tabtabaei -- a long-time opponent of the government who joined the May 31 walk-out -- speculated to the press in interviews prior to the convening of parliament that the new cabinet would not last more than six months.

Composition of the New Cabinet

¶6. (U) No Change to Portfolios:

-- Prime Minister Nasser al-Muhammad al-Ahmad Al Sabah was born in 1940. He received a General Education Certificate in the UK in 1959 and a High-Degree diploma in French Language in 1960. He began working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1964. He became third secretary at the MFA and joined the Kuwaiti UN delegation in October of that year. In 1965 Nasser al-Muhammad became Kuwait's permanent representative at the UN in Geneva. He was named consul general to Switzerland in 1967. He next served as Ambassador to Iran from 1968 until 1979 when he was appointed an undersecretary in the Ministry of Information. In 1985 he became Minister of Information, a post he held until 1988. He then served as Minister of Labor and Social Affairs until 1990 when in June he became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. In 1998 Nasser al-Muhammad was appointed Minister of the Amiri Diwan, a post he held until being named Prime Minister on 7 February 2006. (Ruling Family)

-- First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad Al Sabah was born in 1948. In the past he served as governor of the Ahmadi and Hawalli governorates and as Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Minister of Information, and as an adviser to the former Amir Jabir's diwan. Jaber al-Mubarak was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense on 14 February 2001. He was promoted to First Deputy Prime Minister in October 2007 and was re-appointed in May 0f 2007 and January of this year. (Ruling Family)

-- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Mohammad al-Sabah al-Salem Al Sabah was born in 1955. He earned a BA in Economics from Claremont McKenna College and a PhD in Economics from Harvard University. He taught in the Faculty of Commerce and Economy, and political science courses at Kuwait University from 1979-1985. During that time he served as chair of the economic department for two years. He taught at the Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research from 1987-1988. In 1993 he was appointed Ambassador to Washington. On 14 February 2001 he became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and was promoted to Minister of Foreign Affairs and acting Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in 2003. In February 2006 Dr. Mohammad became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and has been re-appointed in the subsequent governments. (Ruling Family)

-- Minister of Interior Major General Jaber al-Khaled al-Jaber Al Sabah was born in 1944. He graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and took part in several military courses in the UK and US including at the US Army Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth. He was appointed Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army in 1992. Jaber al-Khalid served as Ambassador to Riyadh beginning in 2001. He has been Minister of Interior since 2007. (Ruling Family)

-- Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Fadhel Safar Ali Safar was born in 1955 and formerly was a manager at the Kuwait Oil Company. Safar was elected to the Municipal Council in 2005 and appointed Minister of Labor and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs in May 2008 and January 2009. (Liberal, Independent Shi'a, affiliated with Shiite National Islamic Alliance)

-- Minister of Finance Mustafa Jassem al-Shamali was born in 1943. He earned a bachelor's in Commerce and Administrative

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Studies from Ain Shams University. He began his career in the Ministry of Finance in 1968 and held several important positions and was appointed Minister of Finance in October 2007 and re-appointed in successive governments. (Liberal, Independent Shi'a)

New Ministers/Portfolios:

-- Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Minister of State for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Ahmad al-Fahd al-Jaber Al Sabah was born in 1963 and holds a BA in economics and political science from Kuwait University. He was President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee from 1990-2001; in 2001 he was elected to the International Olympic Committee. He is also president of the Olympic Council of Asia. In February 2001 Ahmad al-Fahd was appointed Minister of Information and was acting Minister of Oil in 2003. He became Minister of Energy July 14, 2003 (but resigned in March 2006 from this position amid allegations of corruption). On 15 September, 2004, he was selected to serve as the Chairman of the OPEC Ministerial Conference. Ahmad al-Fahd served as Minister of Energy and acting Minister of Health from 15 April 2005 until his appointment as Director of the National Security Bureau in July 2006. (Ruling Family)

-- Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs justice

Rashid Abd al-Muhsin al-Hammad began his career in the Sentencing Enforcement Department at the Ministry of Justice after he graduated from Al Azhar University in 1963. He became a judge in 1967. Abd al-Muhsin was appointed Supreme Judge of the court of appeals after liberation in 1991. He was promoted to Deputy Chief of the court of Cassation (the Kuwaiti equivalent of the Supreme Court) on 15 July, 2002. (Conservative, Pro-Government)

-- Minister of Commerce and Industry Ahmad Rashed al-Haroun was a secretary for the financial committee of the National Assembly and as deputy chief of the Public Authority for Social Security. He has been chair of the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce and Industry since 1994. He hails from a well known middle-class family. One of his brothers, Abd al-Wahab, is a former MP and former chairman of the Kuwait Public Transport Company. Another brother, Musaid, is Kuwait's Ambassador to Canada and former Minister of Education and Higher Education. A third brother, Abd al-Rahman is a lawyer. (Independent)

-- Minister of Oil and Information Ahmed al-Abdullah al-Ahmed Al Sabah was born in 1952. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1976, majoring in Bank Funding and Finance. He then worked at the Kuwait's Finance Center until 1978 when he transferred to the Central Bank. In 1987 Ahmad al-Abdallah was the chairman of the board of Burgan Bank from 1987-1998. In July 1999 he was appointed Minister of Finance and Minister of Communications. In February 2001 he was appointed Minister of Communications and in 2003 added the Minister of Planning and Minister of State for Administrative Affairs portfolios. Ahmad al-Abdallah was appointed Minister of Communications and Minister of Health in June of 2005. (He was grilled and forced to resign in March of 2007). He was first appointed Minister of Oil in January. (Ruling Family)

-- Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Roudhan Abd al-Aziz al-Roudhan was born in 1965. He earned a diploma from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. He was deputy chief of the Municipal Council from 1999-2001 and head of the council 2001-03. Al-Roudhan was elected to the Assembly in 2008 and 2009. He was Minister of Health in the January 2009 government. (Independent, Pro-Government)

-- Minister of Communications and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr. Mohammad Mohsen al-Baseeri was born in 1955 and has a PhD in Mechanical Engineering. He was elected to the Assembly in 1999, 2003, and 2006. He was Deputy Speaker of the Assembly in 2009. (Independent, ICM-affiliated)

-- Minister of Higher Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr. Moudhi Abd al-Aziz al-Humoud earned a Bachelor's degree and a Master's in Business Administration in 1973 and 1976 from the University of North Texas. She also holds a PhD from the University of London. A former professor at Kuwait University, she was Minister of Housing and Minister of State for Development Affairs in May 2008 and January 2009. (Liberal, National Democratic Alliance-affiliated, sole female minister)

-- Minister of Electricity and Water Dr. Bader Shabab al-Shuraiaan al-Azmi holds a Bachelor's in mechanical

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engineering from Kuwait University and earned a master's degree and PhD in 1999 and 2003 in engineering from Ohio University. (Independent, Pro-Government)

-- Minister of Health Dr. Hilal Musaed al-Sayer was formerly President of the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH), and formerly dean of the Kuwait University Medical School. He has also held many positions in the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society and other humanitarian institutions. His daughter is married to FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed al-Sabah al-Salem Al Sabah's son. (Liberal, Independent)

-- Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Mohammad Mohsen al-Afasi attained his Law PhD in Lebanon and formerly held the rank of Major General in the Defense Ministry.
(Conservative, Pro-Government)

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